

Spring Flowering Native Plants of Washington, D.C. and Vicinity

Presentation by Rod Simmons

Ford Nature Center
March 26, 2011



Turkey Run Park. Photo by R. H. Simmons

Spring ephemerals are wildflowers of the deciduous forest that leaf out and bloom in early through mid-spring, are pollinated, and largely disappear before the forest canopy substantially leafs out. Extensive, intermixed colonies of these plants carpet the floor of rich, mesic forests and floodplain forests throughout the region.



Photo by R.H. Simmons

Holmes Run Gorge, Fairfax County, Virginia



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Basic Mesic Forest with *Claytonia virginica* – Turkey Run Park, Fairfax County, Virginia

Potomac Gorge

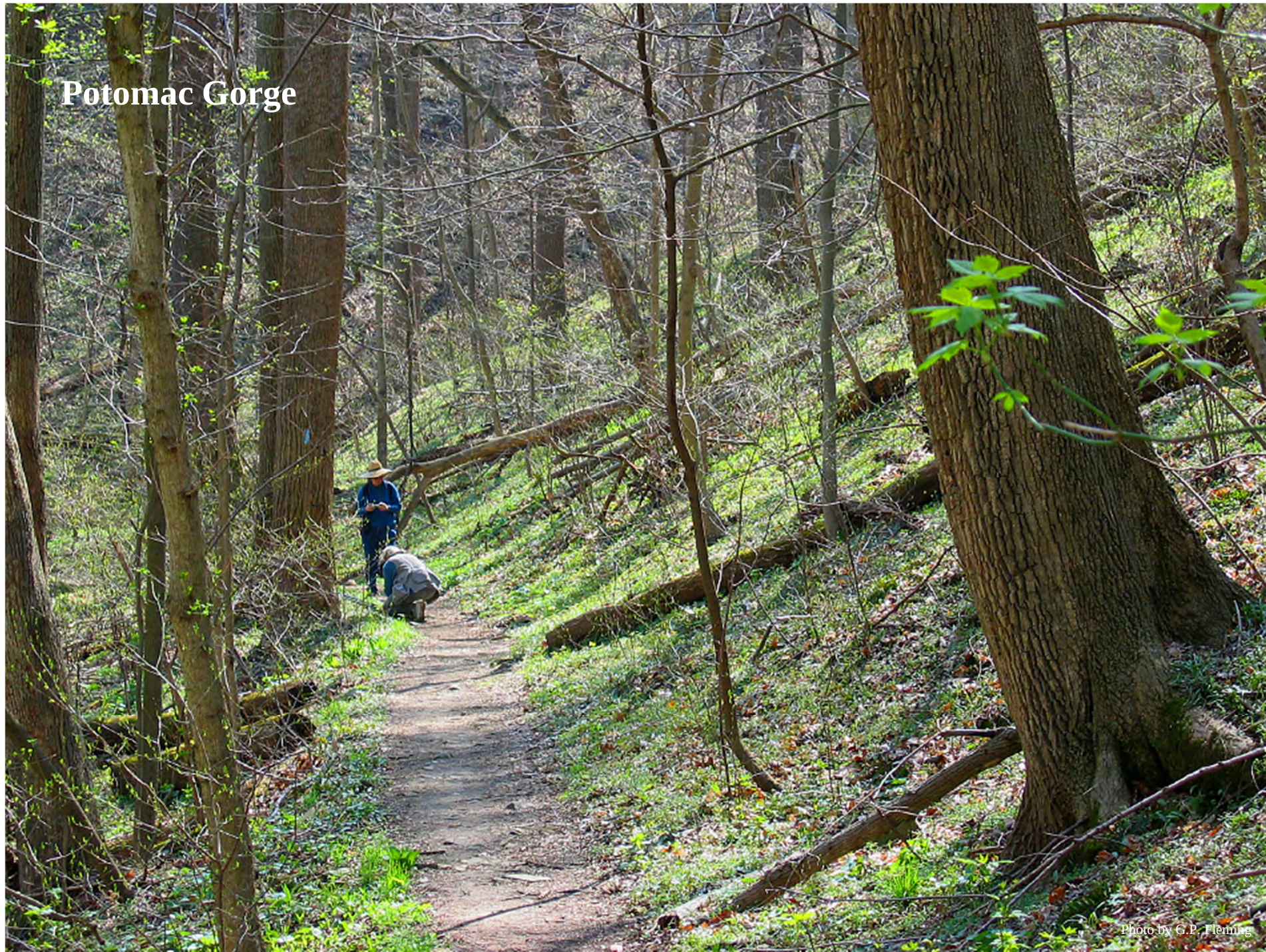


Photo by C.P. Fleming



Photo by R.H. Simmons

Rich Alluvial Floodplain Forest at Dora Kelley Nature Park, eastern end of the Holmes Run Gorge in the City of Alexandria, Virginia

Lush foliage of spring ephemerals in late spring, Holmes Run Gorge



Photo by R.H. Simmons

Late spring foliage of Rich Cove Forest at Lost
Mountain, Washington County, Virginia

Photo by G.P. Fleming

Photo by R.H. Simmons



Spring ephemerals have evolved along with other plants, animals, and microorganisms over millennia, each occupying its special niche, to form the Eastern Deciduous Forest that many of us live in the midst of. Today, many fine remnants of this once-vast forest still remain in our region, but there is also much fragmentation and disturbance, including new threats such as invasive exotic plants and insects.



Photo by R.H. Simmons



Photo by G.P. Fleming

**Basic Mesic Forest with large clone of *Podophyllum peltatum* – Turkey Run Park,
Fairfax County, Virginia**



Photo by Dianne H. Simmons

Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina*)



Photo by R.H. Simmons

“Some species of ants harvest and ‘plant’... certain other spring wildflowers in a symbiotic relationship called myrmecochory – literally ‘ant farming.’ They are drawn to the seeds by small protuberances called elaiosomes that contain attractive oils and possibly sugars. The ants carry the seeds, sometimes as far as 70 yards, to their nests where they eat the treat. The shell, however, is too hard to open, so the ants discard the seed proper, often in an unused tunnel in the nest. Here, amid nutrients provided by the soil and accidentally by the housekeeping ants, the seed has a much better chance of producing a plant than one does dropped on the forest floor where it may be eaten by foraging birds and rodents.” - Jack Sanders, *The Secret of Wildflowers: A Delightful Feast of Little-Known Facts, Folklore, and History*



Photo by R.H. Simmons

Great Falls of the Potomac River. The Fall Line is a zone of transition between the Coastal Plain and Piedmont physiographic provinces, where the hard, crystalline bedrock of the Piedmont descends under the soft sediments of the Coastal Plain, giving rise to numerous falls and rapids.



Photo by M. T. First

Harbinger of Spring
(***Erigenia bulbosa***)





Photo by G.P. Fleming

**Rich floodplain forest with *Mertensia virginica* along the Appomattox River,
Prince Edward County, Virginia**



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Mertensia virginica



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Thalictrum thalictroides



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Stellaria pubera



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Cardamine concatenata



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Claytonia virginica



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Rich herbs at Scotts Run Nature Preserve, Fairfax County, Virginia

Packera aurea



Photo by R.H. Simmons



***Podophyllum
peltatum***

Geranium maculatum

Photo by R.H. Simmons



Cardamine bulbosa



Photo by Jennifer Millwood

Asimina triloba

Erythronium americanum



Photo by R.H. Simmons



Anemone quinquefolia



Photo by R.H. Simmons

Chrysogonum virginianum

Photo by R.H. Simmons



Panax trifolius



Photo by R.H. Simmons



Photo by G.P. Fleming

***Trillium sessile* (red form)**



Photo by G.P. Fleming

***Trillium sessile* (yellow form)**



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Caulophyllum thalictroides



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Dicentra canadensis



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Trillium sessile



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Dicentra cucullaria



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Asarum canadense

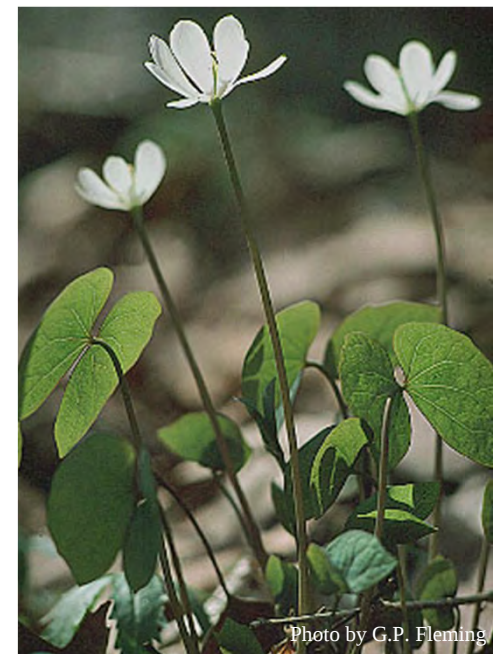


Photo by G.P. Fleming

Jeffersonia diphylla



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Rich floodplain forest with large clone of *Allium tricoccum* – Riverbend Park, Fairfax County, Virginia



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Platanus occidentalis



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Phacelia covillei



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Erythronium albidum



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Liriodendron tulipifera



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Phlox divaricata



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Rich floodplain forest with large clone of *Hydrophyllum canadense* – Turkey Run Park, Fairfax County, Virginia



Photo by R.H. Simmons

Viola bicolor



Photo by R.H. Simmons

Viola sororia



Photo by R.H. Simmons

Viola sororia



Viola striata

Photo by R.H. Simmons

Photo by M.T. First



Maianthemum racemosum

Polygonatum biflorum



Photo by M.T. First



Tiarella cordifolia
(top right)

Mitella diphylla
(below left)





Photo by C.P. Fleming

**Rich Cove Forest with *Cercis canadensis* – Wildcat Mountain Natural Area,
Watery Mountain, Fauquier County, Virginia**



Photo by G.P. Fleming

**Rich Cove Forest with *Trillium grandiflorum* – Hightop Mountain,
Shenandoah National Park, Greene County, Virginia**

Photo by R.H. Simmons



Polemonium reptans

Iris cristata



Photo by R.H. Simmons

Rich limestone slope along the New River, Wythe County, Virginia



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Acidic Cove Forest of the Ridge and Valley, Smyth County, Virginia



Photo by G.P. Fleming



Photo by G.P. Fleming

View of forests in spring anthesis from Reddish Knob, Augusta County, Virginia



Photo by R.H. Simmons



Photo by L.H. Sharp/GMU

Trillium undulatum



Photo by L.H. Sharp/GMU

Clintonia borealis



Mountain stream in the Ridge and Valley with *Orontium aquaticum*

Acidic Seepage Swamp of the Coastal Plain, Prince George's County, Maryland



Photo by R.H. Simmons



Extensive D.C. vicinity Pine Barrens with *Pinus rigida* at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, Prince George's County, Maryland



Photo by R.H. Simmons

**Deep sands of the Potomac Formation – Prince George's and Anne
Arundel Counties, Maryland**



Photo by R.H. Simmons

***Pinus rigida* – *Quercus coccinea* – *Quercus falcata* / (*Quercus marilandica*) / *Gaylussacia frondosa*
Woodland CEG006329 Global/State Ranks: G1/S1**



Photo by R.H. Simmons

Lupinus perennis

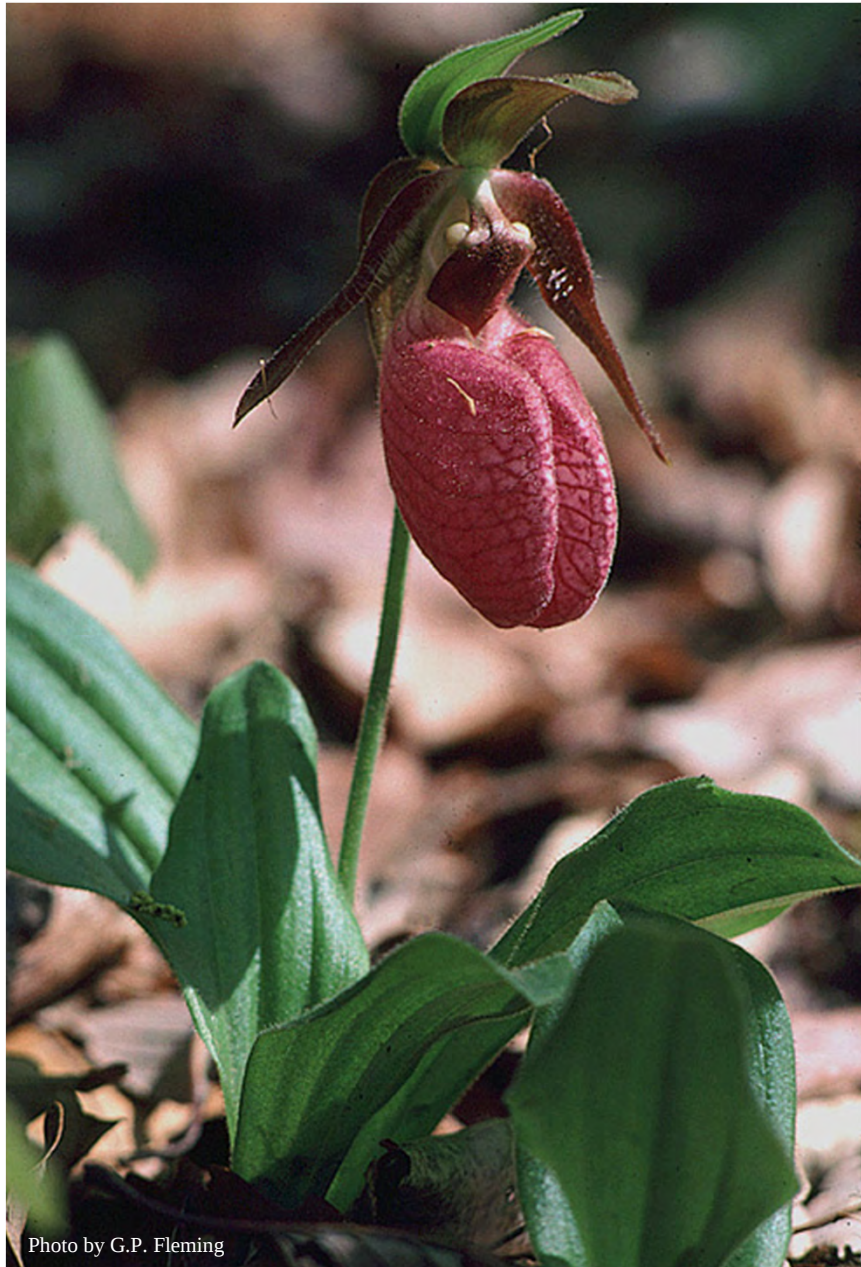


Photo by G.P. Fleming

Cypripedium acaule



Photo by G.P. Fleming

Iris verna



Photo by R.H. Simmons

Old-age Terrace Gravel Forest (Oak-Heath Forest) in the City of Alexandria, Virginia

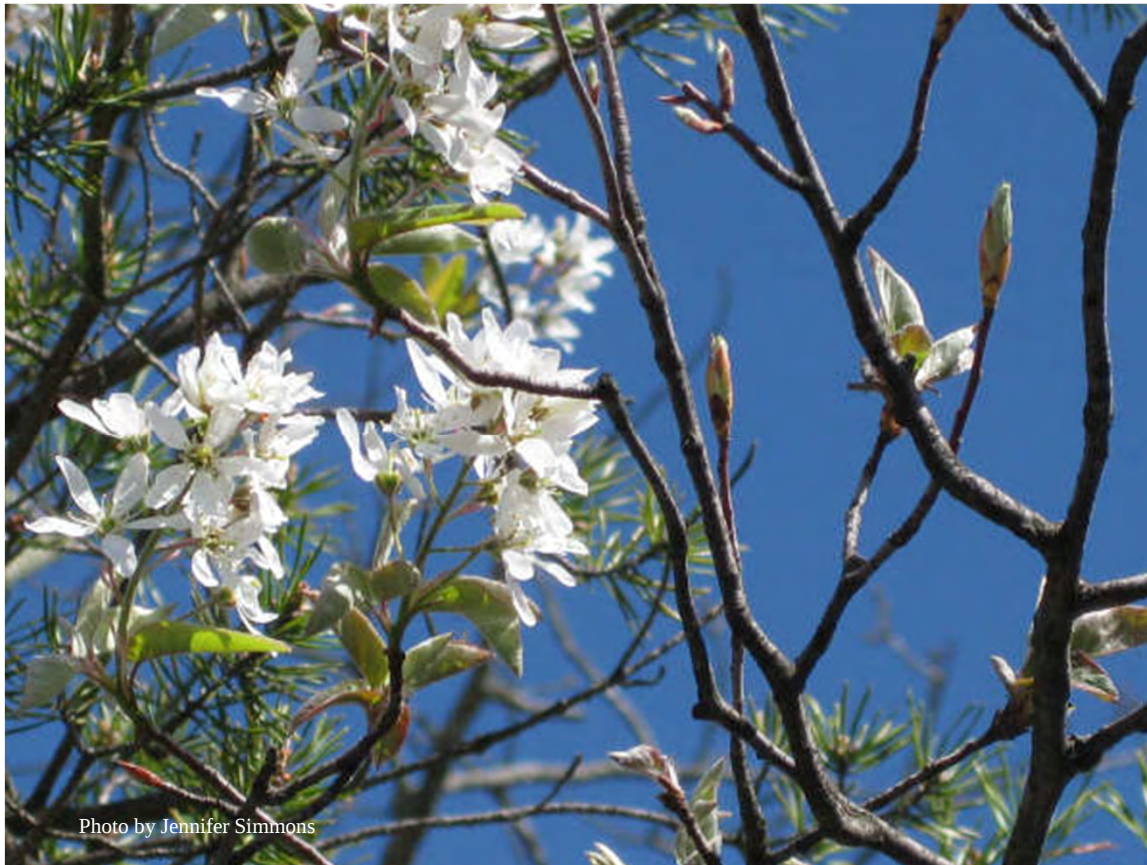


Photo by Jennifer Simmons

Amelanchier laevis

Carex nigromarginata



Photo by R.H. Simmons

Antennaria plantaginifolia

Photo by R.H. Simmons



Silene caroliniana

Photo by L.H. Sharp/GMU

Rhododendron periclymenoides

Photo by R.H. Simmons



Vaccinium fuscatum

Photo by R.H. Simmons



Epigaea repens

Photo by R.H. Simmons



Kalmia latifolia

Photo by R.H. Simmons



Photo by R.H. Simmons

Local field trips and programs by Maryland and Virginia Native Plant Societies, Arlington and Fairfax Master Naturalists, Botanical Society of Washington, nature centers, and others.

A photograph of a forest stream. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding trees and rocks. Large, flat rocks are scattered along the banks and in the water. The trees are mostly bare, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting. The overall scene is serene and natural.

Acknowledgements:

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